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Ministry of Forests and Range

ENJOY CAMPFIRES SAFELY THIS LONG WEEKEND

VICTORIA – An extended stretch of dry, hot weather means much of British Columbia is now at a moderate or high risk of wildfire, cautioned Forests Minister Richard Coleman today.

"The May long weekend is a time for family and friends to get out and enjoy British Columbia's natural beauty," said Coleman. "Let's protect our province by making sure campfires are completely out when we're done with them."

People cause about half of all wildfires in the province each year. Since April, there have been more than 350 fires, nearly all of them the result of escaped backyard or grass burns. So far this year, wildfires have burnt over 4,000 hectares and cost more than $5 million to fight.

Although rain is forecast for some areas of the province this weekend, it may not be sufficient to eliminate the risk of escaped campfires. As well, the risk of lightning may mean increased fire activity early in the weekend.

Due to dry, hot conditions, open fire restrictions are currently in effect in the Prince George and North West Fire Centres.

For a better campfire:

- Check with authorities to find out if there are any restrictions on campfires.
- Consider the conditions before you light the campfire. Wind may carry sparks to combustible materials.
- Keep your fire small. The best cooking fire is small and hot.
- Keep adequate hand tools and water nearby in case the fire escapes.
- Never leave fire unattended.
- Extinguish the fire by stirring water into the ashes until it is cold to the touch.

For the latest information on current wildfire activity or open fire restrictions, visit the provincial government website at www.for.gov.bc.ca/protect.

To report a wildfire, call 1-800-663-5555, or *5555 on most cellular networks.

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